

Coalition Asks Congress to Stand Up and Repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

From: The Honorable John Lewis

Sent By: Miguel.Martinez@mail.house.gov

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COALITION ASKS CONGRESS TO STAND UP AND REPEAL "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL"

May 20, 2010

Dear Colleague,

I received the letter below from a coalition comprised of a variety of bipartisan, faith-based, human rights, labor, and other organizations who support and urge Congress to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

I hope that you will read this letter and consider the many brave American soldiers who provide a tremendous service to our country, but are forced to lie each day about who they are in order to protect the American people and our great nation.

Sincerely,

/s/

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Dear Representative/Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our support for repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) law, the current law prohibiting lesbians and gays from serving openly in the U.S. Armed Forces. In his State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama said it is time to repeal this discriminatory law. We agree. DADT should be repealed this year.

Military leaders support a review and repeal of DADT. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen have told Congress that it is time to repeal DADT. Adm. Mullen testified that ~~%~~we have in place a policy that forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, personally, it comes down to integrity . theirs as individuals and ours as an institution." In addition, Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; former Vice President Dick Cheney, defense secretary in the first Bush administration; and retired Gen. James Jones, former Marine Corps Commandant, have all indicated their support for repealing DADT.

DADT is the only law in the country that requires people to be dishonest about their personal lives or face the possibility of being fired. The vast majority of Americans - including majorities of Republicans, Independents and Democrats - recognize that on the battlefield, it does not matter whether a service member is lesbian, gay or straight; what matters is that a soldier gets the job done. Public support for open service by lesbian and gay troops has grown by 31 percentage points since DADT was introduced nearly two decades ago. *A Washington Post/ABC News* poll conducted in February 2010 found that 75% of Americans believe openly lesbian and gay citizens should be able to serve in the U.S. military, compared to 62% in 2001 and 44% in 1993.

The Department of Defense has commissioned a Working Group to conduct a comprehensive review of the issues associated with repeal. Its task is to study how best to implement repeal of the law, not to determine whether or not the DADT law should be repealed. While the Working Group report, which will be complete by December 1, 2010, will serve as a guidepost for implementation, it is not necessary that the review be completed before Congress repeals DADT. In fact, we believe that repeal language should be included in the Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 2011.

Each day that Congress fails to act, lesbian and gay service members must continue to serve in silence. They must lie to avoid prematurely ending their military careers. Please vote for the repeal of DADT this year.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA
Campaign for America's Future
Center for American Progress
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders

GOProud
Human Rights Campaign
Interfaith Alliance
Lambda Legal
Log Cabin Republicans
Media Matters Action Network
Metropolitan Community Churches
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on La Raza
National Employment Law Project
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce®
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) National
People For the American Way
Pride at Work
ProgressiveCongress.org
Service Employees International Union
Service Women's Action Network
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
Servicemembers United
Stonewall Democrats
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Third Way
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
VoteVets
Women's Media Center

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